



Fire Watch

A publication of the Potomac Watershed Partnership
Wildfire Prevention and Education Team



Vol. 1 No. 1

Potomac Watershed Partnership

The Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP) is one of 15 projects nationwide bringing public and private organizations together to protect the nation's most vital watersheds.

The Partnership is focusing primarily on the Shenandoah and Monocacy rivers. These sub-watersheds have the most forest tracts destroyed by gypsy moths and wildfire, lowest percentage of healthy riparian forests and wetlands, the highest levels of nutrient and sediment pollution, and some of the greatest development pressures in the Potomac basin.

Public/Private Venture

The PWP draws on the strengths of five primary organizations — the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources/Forest Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Potomac Conservancy. The Partnership has undertaken a variety of efforts to protect the land and waters of this important watershed.

Projects are being designed to reduce wildfires, improve water quality; enhance forest, wetland, and aquatic habitats; restore threatened and endangered species; reduce erosion; and conserve open space.



Photo by Jim Mehring

Citizens benefit from these efforts as well — through healthier streams and landscapes, improved flood and fire control, increased land values, education, and cleaner water.

Fire Watch

This is the inaugural issue of FireWatch, a publication of the Virginia Department of Forestry's Potomac Watershed Partnership Wildfire Prevention and Education Team. Each issue will feature stories on wildfire prevention and education.

Prevention Team

The Shenandoah Valley Wildfire Prevention and Education Team's mission is to cut the number and size of wildfires in Potomac River Watershed forests by half the 1993-1998 average by the year 2005 in a 7-county area.

The team has fire prevention specialists to provide information about wildfire prevention in Frederick, Clarke, Warren, Page, Shenandoah, Rockingham and Augusta counties, as well as Shenandoah National Park and George Washington and Jefferson National Forest.

Team members are available to present education programs at schools and other community organizations.

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Wildfire Prevention Resources

Shenandoah Valley Interagency Wildfire Prevention Team

The Challenge

As suburban communities edge ever closer to forested areas, protecting residents from the threat of wildfire becomes increasingly important. With fire danger extremely high in Virginia and West Virginia, the Virginia Department of Forestry developed the Interagency Shenandoah Valley Fire Prevention Team to address the watershed's fire prevention needs.

Three Agencies, One Mission

The USDA Forest Service, the Virginia Department of Forestry and the National Park Service have a common goal to protect lives and property from the threat of wildfire. Specific goals of the Wildfire Prevention Team include reducing the number of fires on federal, state and private lands; enlisting residents' help in reporting arson and suspicious activities; and educating residents about woodland home forest wildfire prevention strategies.

The team employs a wide range of informational tactics to educate residents in a seven-county area about fire prevention, including: press releases, electronic media, door-to-door contacts, posters, bilingual flyers (Russian, Spanish, and English), Smokey Bear appearances and handouts, hunter contacts, and arson education. The team has also been involved in training workshops and plans to continue working with volunteers throughout the watershed to prevent forest fires. Since the creation of the team, the state of Virginia has had fewer fire starts than other adjoining states with similar fire danger.

The team was so successful that it recently won the USDA Forest Service's annual Robert E. Browning, Jr., award, which recognizes excellence in fire prevention programs. The interagency team includes staff from the Virginia Department of Forestry, George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, and the National Park Service.

Looking Ahead

Although the team saw a drop in human-caused fires, the Shenandoah Valley continues to develop at a rapid pace, meaning that new communities will need to be educated about the threat of wildfire.

www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/gwj/lee



Firewise Virginia

Living in a house surrounded by nature and woodlands can be peaceful and beautiful, but it can also be risky.

Many new residents to rural areas bring with them a "back to nature" philosophy that harbors a desire to leave their property and all of the property around them as undisturbed as possible. This philosophy often leads to insufficient access roads and hazardous fuel conditions very near homes, creating a dangerous situation for rural homeowners and firefighters in the event of a wildfire.



Building Fire Safety Into Landscape Design

Firewise home and subdivision design can significantly increase the chances a community will survive a wildfire. Home designs should include a safe location for the house and the use of less combustible materials. Subdivision designs should include proper access and turnarounds, suitable signage, and adequate water supplies for fire control.

Firewise principals are the responsibility of everyone. Property owners, developers, emergency managers and government officials all play a role in making your home and everyone's home Firewise.

www.firewiseVirginia.org

The National Fire Plan

This is a cooperative, long-term effort of the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters. As you visit this site, you will see how the federal government and state partners are managing impacts of wildland fire to our Nation's communities.

The USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior are in the second year of National Fire Plan implementation. Significant headway was made in 2001 to meet both the intent and specific direction from Congress in the 2001 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. There are also tracking and reporting mechanisms in place to provide accountability as accomplishments are made in firefighting, rehabilitation and restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, community assistance and research.

www.fireplan.gov

Back To School Time For Smokey

Grant Helps Expand Smokey's Message In Valley Classrooms

Smokey sightings at Shenandoah Valley elementary schools and events have been on the upswing this year, thanks to a grant that's expanded the popular Smokey Bear wildfire prevention program.

State forestry personnel normally conduct the Smokey presentations, but personnel changes and added work load have made it harder to get around.

In Augusta County, for instance, Smokey's tracks hadn't been seen in some schools for several years.

Grant Aid

Virginia's forestry department is using part of a National Fire Plan Grant to hire part time staff to get Smokey back into Augusta's schools, as well increase his presence at events in Rockingham, Page, Shenandoah, Warren, Clarke and Frederick counties.

The money, which funds the Potomac Watershed Partnership, an interstate, interagency environmental protection agreement between government and private landowners, paid for the development of programs and educational materials.

The school programs are only one part of the team's goal of cutting wildfires by 50 percent by 2005, according to team leader Cindy Frenzel.

The team has designed displays, manned information



Potomac Watershed Fire Prevention Team member Samantha Johnson (above and below) draws Smokey's story at a school program in the Valley.



booths, and spoken to community groups about the need for wildfire prevention. Still, school programs are at the heart of any long term education plan.

"Children from kindergarten to second grade learn about forest resources and why we should protect them from devastating unwanted, uncontrolled wildfires," Frenzel said.

Chalk Talks

Though there have been many varieties of Smokey programs, ranging in format from puppet shows to a Jeopardy-style quiz show, the team opted for a simple, "chalk talk" that tells Smokey's life story.



Student volunteers spell out Smokey's message.



Team member Susie Howard next to a Smokey display.

As a narrator recounts Smokey's origins, an artist draws on a large sketch pad a scene of a little bear cub clinging to a burned tree limb following a 1950 fire in New Mexico's Capitan Mountains.

Firefighters were so touched by the cub, the narrator says, that they took him to an animal hospital. The artist simultaneously draws the cub sitting with one arm in a sling and a big bandaid on his forehead.

It's My Job, Too

The people of New Mexico decided to send the little cub around the country as a symbol of the horrible cost of wildfires, the narrator continues. The program ends with the narrator bringing Smokey himself out on the

stage, serenaded by a chorus of oohs and ahhs. Thereupon four young volunteers from the audience rise from their seats at the front of the stage, their T-shirts spelling out "It's My Job Too."

"I have been impressed with the way the kids grasp the concept of 'It's My Job, Too' for preventing wildfires," said team member Gary Spitzer, who has narrated several of the presentations. "They are very interested and seem to hold onto the message."

Education Pays Off

They especially like it when Smokey finally makes his appearance. Many looked forward for weeks to the day when he was to appear, and they eagerly lined up to shake his hand or give him a hug at the end of each program.

The Wildfire Prevention and Education Team is planning to hit more schools next year, and perhaps expand its educational program to the middle and high school level.

Thanks to fire prevention education, Virginia has the lowest number of forest fires in the south, Frenzel said.

Smokey Bear and the school programs "are an integral part of our prevention and education program," said the forestry department's Fred Turck.

"Although Smokey is turning 60 in 2004 he and his message are as important today as they were when first introduced," Turck said.

So Who Is Smokey Bear?

For Almost 60 years, he's adorned posters and ads, road signs and logos, cartoons and comic books.

Sometimes he's appeared live, in classrooms, fairs and festivals from one end of the country to the other, in his patented workman-like blue jeans and forester's hat.

The round, fuzzy figure first drawn by Albert Staele in 1944 has become one of the most recognizable icons of the last century, his message, "Only you can prevent forest fires," as famous as the opening line of Genesis, as Smokeybear.com put it. He's become the longest-running public service ad in American history.

Birth of an Icon

Smokey got his start from, of all things, an attack by a Japanese submarine off the coast of Southern California in 1942. Some shells landed on an oil refinery near Santa Barbara, close to the Los Padres National Forest. The fear was that similar attacks could set off forest fires, endangering the nation's timber supply, vital to the production of battleships, gun stocks, packing crates and many other items crucial to the war effort.

In fact, many people thought this could be part of Japan's war strategy. With so many American men going into the military, how much manpower would be available to fight wildfires?

With forest protection now a national priority, government officials looked to cut the number of accidental fires. If people could be urged to be more careful, they figured, perhaps some of the fires could be prevented.

With this in mind, the Forest Service organized the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention Campaign with the help of the Wartime Advertising Council.

Previous anti-wildfire campaigns used images of the Grim Reaper or inanimate objects like cigarettes or matches.

The advertising council focused on a gentler, but no less effective image. Capitalizing on the popularity of the 1944 Disney animation classic, Bambi, the council secured permission to use the fawn for a one-year campaign. The ads were a hit, but now the council had to come up with a new mascot who could prove just as popular.

Smokey's Message Through The Years



1955 campaign poster



1944 campaign poster



1960 campaign poster



1962 campaign poster



1962 campaign poster



1965 campaign poster



1963 campaign poster

Smokey

On August 9, 1944, the first poster of Smokey Bear was prepared. The poster depicted a bear pouring a bucket of water on a campfire. Smokey Bear soon became popular, and his image began appearing on other posters and cards.

In 1952, Smokey Bear had enough public recognition to attract commercial interest. An Act of Congress passed to take Smokey out of the public domain and place him under the control of the Secretary of Agriculture. The Act provided for the use of collected royalties and fees for continued education on forest fire prevention.

A Real, Live Smokey

On a dry spring day in 1950, fire swept through the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico. As firefighters finally gained control of the blaze, they discovered a little four-pound bear cub clinging to a limb of a charred tree. His perch had saved his life but he was badly burned on the paws and hind legs.

The firefighters pulled him down and the cub was eventually taken to a veterinary hospital where his burns were treated.

Soon, the story of the cub's rescue became big news in New Mexico. The New Mexico Game Warden wrote to the Chief of the Forest Service, offering the cub to the agency on condition that it be dedicated to a publicity campaign promoting fire prevention and conservation.

In 1941, forest fires destroyed 30 million acres. In 1990, only 5.4 million acres burned, even though 10 times more people use the national forests.

Facts About Smokey

- ◆ **Smokey Bear was named after Joe "Smokey" Martin, an assistant fire chief in New York City from 1919-1930.**
- ◆ **Smokey gets so much mail he has his own zip code: 20252.**
- ◆ **Smokey has inspired counterparts in other nations. Ecuador has a firefighting parrot, Japan has a firefighting squirrel and Australia a Smokey Koala.**
- ◆ **Though he's often referred to as Smokey the Bear, this name comes from a 1952 song that added a "the" between "Smokey" and "bear" to maintain the correct rhythm. His correct name is still Smokey Bear.**
- ◆ **The living Smokey's "adopted" son, Little Smokey, also lived in the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., and carried on the Smokey tradition. With his death in 1990, the living symbol was laid to rest.**
- ◆ **In the 1960s, Smokey starred in an hour-long Thanksgiving Day special narrated by the late James Cagney. He also had a Saturday morning cartoon show.**
- ◆ **In the 1950'S and '60's, the campaign broadened to appeal to children as well as adults, and Smokey evolved with it. His coat and nose got shorter, fingers replaced his claws, he stood more erect and his cartoon eyes gave way to long-lashed human ones.**



The cub was sent to the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., where he became a living symbol of Smokey Bear. After his death in 1976, he was buried in Smokey Bear State Park in Capitan, New Mexico.

Smokey's Success

Smokey Bear has been one of the most successful public service campaigns in American history. As Yogi Berra put it, "You could look it up."

In 1941, forest fires burned 30 million acres across the country. Nine out of 10 blazes were started by people.

After Smokey entered the picture, human-caused wildfires were halved, despite the fact that 10 times more people visit the national forests than in the 1940s. In 1990, only 5.4 million acres were destroyed by fire.

And Smokey's popularity? It's right up there with Coca Cola, Bugs Bunny and the MGM lion.

In a survey a few years ago by the National Ad Council, 95 percent of adults and 77 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 13 recognized Smokey's immortal message: "Only you can prevent forest fires."

Information courtesy of smokeybear.com

Classroom Corner

Each issue of **FireWatch** will feature lesson plans teachers can use to apply wildfire prevention education to Virginia's Standards of Learning.



What Makes Fire?

Fire is a natural part of the forest ecosystem. Some forests even need fire to recycle nutrients back into the soil or to eliminate dead growth to allow new growth.

Fires caused by natural events, like lightning strikes, or by controlled burns can help forests do this. But too much fire, like that caused by unwanted, uncontrolled burning can destroy the balance of the forest ecosystem.

The Fire Triangle

Fires need heat, fuel and oxygen to burn. Weather can affect availability of all three. Heat and wind can dry out wood and grasses, making them available as fuel.

The greater the wind, the greater the rate of evaporation and spread of fire.

(From Project Learning Tree)



Activity

Do not perform this experiment without the supervision of an adult.

- Put lighted candle in a glass jar. Seal with lid. As flame burns oxygen, candle will go out. Oxygen is needed for fire to burn.
- Open jar, relight candle, reseal jar. As flame dies down, reopen lid to show how oxygen feeds fire. Explain that this is how wind can reignite fire.
- Keep lid off and let flame exhaust all paraffin and go out. Let students guess how long this takes. Then do same with two materials, wood and paper matches or corn and potato chips.
- What fuel makes each substance burn? What burns best?



Photo courtesy of Holiday Lake Forestry Camp 2001



Photo courtesy of Holiday Lake Forestry Camp 2001

Cool Links

For Kids:

- ◆ vdof.org/coned/index.shtml Coloring sheets from the Virginia Department of Forestry.
- ◆ nwf.org/kids National Wildlife Federation site offers games and activities for all ages.
- ◆ plt.org: Project Learning Tree - This Standards Of Learning (SOL) program teaches students in grades K through 9 about trees and the environment. Also check out cnr.vt.edu/plt/Virginia:
- ◆ smokeybear.com Join Smokey for some forest and campfire fun, and learn Smokey's rules for forest fire safety and prevention.
- ◆ fs.fed.us/spf/woodsy "Give a hoot. Don't Pollute." Coloring sheets and an activity guide.
- ◆ Yucky.kids.discovery.com Explore Worm World.
- ◆ usfa.fema.gov/kids Fire safety info for teachers, parents and kids.

For Teachers:

- ◆ forestry2.ca.uky.edu/conners/tc.htm The many everyday items that use wood.
- ◆ About.com List of links to many different activities.
- ◆ Arborday.org Information resource site.
- ◆ ex.ac.uk/bugclub Promote the study of entomology, especially among amateurs and the younger generation.
- ◆ discovery.com A commercial-free public service web site devoted to educational activities and support for K-12 educators, students and parents.
- ◆ globe.gov GLOBE is a worldwide hands-on, primary and secondary school-based education and science program.
- ◆ nationalgeographic.com/forest Explore a variety of habitats on this National Geographic site.

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Unwanted wildfires, started by arson or negligence, can damage private and public properties, degrade watershed health and put the community and firefighters at risk.

In 2001, for the first time, Virginia had more wildfires started by arsonists than any other cause.

In the Shenandoah Valley, the average fire causes between 1995

and 2000 were virtually a tie between arson and debris burning. Stopping adult and child arson is a community responsibility. Fire caused by equipment use came in third, with smoking and children at fourth and fifth, respectively.

There were significantly more arson fires than debris fires in Page, Clarke and Warren counties.



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